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Sriman BISWANATH DAS Mahasayo :—" Are we to understand that the grant of one lakh of rupees for flood relief in the last session is to form no part of the relief ? "

The hon. the RAJA OF KOLLENGODE :—" I want notice."

Forests.

Forest panchayats in Cuddapah district.

74 Q.—Rai Bahadur T. M. NARASIMHACHARLU : Will the hon. the Home Member be pleased to state—

(a) how many forest panchayats are working in Cuddapah district ;

(b) whether any of them are working efficiently ; and

(c) how many reserved forests have been disafforested during the years 1922–23 and 1923–24 in the Cuddapah district ?

A.—(a) & (b) Forty-six forest panchayats were organized in the district till 30th September 1923 and of these 24 are reported to have been working well and three to be deserving of special mention.

(c) In 1922–23 one reserved forest measuring 3,390 acres and portions of three reserved forests measuring 232·95 acres and in 1923–24 portion of a reserved forest measuring 72·50 acres were disafforested in the district.

Government Press.

The staff of the Government Press.

75 Q.—Rao Sahib U. RAMA RAO : Will the hon. the Member for Finance be pleased to state—

(1) whether the Government Press employees are overworked and whether the Surgeon of the First District has remarked that most of the employees are anæmic ;

(2) whether the Superintendent, Government Press, Madras, is granting leave without pay to employees of long service when they are unable to attend the office in times of epidemic, such as influenza, when they are eligible for other kinds of leave ;

(3) whether the Superintendent, Government Press, is withholding increments and promotions from those who are obliged to take leave owing to illness ;

(4) whether the Government have received memorials to the effect that, in view of the fact that reorganization has not taken place for the last thirty years, the present revised scale is most unsatisfactory, and that the present revision makes no distinction between skilled and unskilled labour, etc. ;

(5) if so, how many such have been received and what are the orders passed in each case ;

(6) whether the present revised scale is far below that existing in other Government Presses, and if so, whether the Government would consider the advisability of introducing uniform scales ;

(7) whether the Government have sanctioned the scheme of amalgamation of stationery and printing offices in view of economy, and if so why it has not been given effect to ;

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(8) what is the pay of the present Lino-mechanic operator and what necessitated his appointment when retrenchment is going on in every department; how many lino-mechanics there are in the Government Press and what is the value of each machine and its outturn; and

(9) if the Government have no information on any of these points, whether the Government will be pleased to call for a report and lay it on the table?

A.—(1) The Government have no reason to believe that the employees in the Government Press are generally overworked. There is, of course, considerable pressure of urgent work about the time of each Legislative Council meeting and a good deal of overtime was necessitated in connexion with the elections. The Surgeon, First District, did once remark to the Superintendent that a number of the men were anæmic, but he did not attribute this to overwork. A more probable cause lies in the surroundings in which they live. A further contributory factor is perhaps to be found in the state of the Mint Buildings for the reconstruction of which the Council refused a grant in the budget debate of 1921–22 on the motion of the hon. Member who has asked the question.

(2) The Superintendent reports that 97 per cent of the applications for leave with pay are granted. It is only in the case of men who are attempting to shirk work that leave is given on loss of pay.

(3) The answer is in the negative. The Superintendent withholds increments only from persons who have been warned at least four times for bad work.

(4) & (5) Some memorials were received in the years 1920, 1921 and 1922. A reorganization has since been made. No memorials of the kind indicated in the question have been received.

(6) The Government have no information as to the scale of pay given in places like Calcutta, Bombay and Delhi. It is not usual to level up the rates of wages in cities in which expenses of living differ. Nor, since the rates vary from place to place, would it be possible to make the Madras rates uniform with them all.

(7) The scheme referred to was not designed in the interests of economy. It has been deferred for a variety of reasons, among which were the appointment of the Stores Purchase Committee and the discussions regarding the abolition of the Madras Collectorate. It is probable that it would not be found suitable to present conditions.

(8) The appointment of a linotype operator was necessitated in order to bring the equipment and working of the Press more up to date than it is. There was no question of retrenchment or of additional expense since the officer appointed takes the place of a Deputy Superintendent in the Press. There are four linotype machines at present in the Press valued respectively at Rs. 11,000, Rs. 9,000, Rs. 7,000 and Rs. 7,000. There are no lino-mechanics employed and it was in order to train some that an operator was brought out from England in place of a Deputy Superintendent. The outturn of the machines was 1,141 pages

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in 1921–22 and 301 pages in 1922–23. It is hoped that, as soon as a sufficient number of operators have been trained, the output will be very greatly increased and there will be in consequence a large reduction in compositors' and supervision charges.

Employment of ex-war men in the Government Press.

76 Q.—Rao Sahib U. Rama Rao: Will the hon. the Member for Finance be pleased to state—

(1) what special concessions are given to passed candidates in the Government Press who have volunteered themselves for war service before the Armistice; and

(2) whether they are now being offered the minimum salary as if their sacrifice and war service count for nothing and whether they are treated as passed candidates fresh from school or college?

A.—Ex-service men in the Government Press have been given the same concessions as were given to similar men in other Government offices. The details of the concessions will be found in G.O. No. 74, Public, dated 5th February 1923, which has been laid upon the Editors' Table.

Harbour.

Disembarkation of deck passengers at the Madras Harbour.

77 Q.—Mr. S. Satyamurti: Will the hon. the Member for Finance be pleased to state—

(1) whether deck passengers from the Straits Settlements are not allowed to get down from the steamers on any wharf in the Madras Harbour but taken on cargo-boats for about half a mile, to their great inconvenience and discomfort;

(2) whether deck passengers are not allowed the use of the doorways and the ladders in the steamers built for the use of passengers, but are loaded and unloaded through holes intended for the loading and unloading of sheep and coal, by lascars without any reference to the passengers' comfort or decency; and

(3) whether the Government propose to take any steps to alleviate the sufferings of these unfortunate passengers?

A.—(1) The answer is in the negative. Whenever a quay berth is available, the passengers embark or disembark direct by the quay. When the exigencies of traffic are such that no quay berth is available, the passengers are embarked or disembarked in boats. This occurred during 1923 in the case of about half the passengers.

(2) Deck passengers are embarked and disembarked through the entry ports, which are constructed for this among other purposes. It would not be safe to allow a large number of passengers hampered by quantities of luggage to utilize the gangways provided for first and second class passengers.

(3) The Government have already sanctioned the construction of three new deep water quays, and when these have been constructed, it is hoped that all vessels having passengers will be